

This Monstrous War



ALFRED G. BURCH

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Wilfred G. Burchett

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Wingate Adventure

Democracy with a Tommy-Gun

Cold War in Germany

People's Democracies

The Changing Tide (a Play in Five Acts)

China's Feet Unbound

Koje Unscreened (with Alan Winnington)

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

When Wilfred Burchett sent me the manuscript of this book, he faced me with a dilemma. Here undoubtedly, was the most important book he had written during a long and honorable career as a correspondent who always has the knack of being on those particular spots where history is being made.

The manuscript was a remarkable one in every way; written right there in the fighting line, at the "peace talks," among the people of North Korea—written, literally, out of the battle. For the first time we were being privileged to read the truth about this "cruel, nasty and hopeless war." The barrage of lies of film, press and radio was being surmounted and the courage and honesty of a great journalist was bringing the real news of the Korean war to the great numbers of people so anxiously awaiting it.

This was a vitally important book if ever there was one, and yet it faced me, as I have said, with a dilemma. It was a very long manuscript—more than 200,000 words; for no statement was allowed to go without documentation, unchecked, unverified. In these days of high costs and falling purchasing power to publish the complete manuscript in book form would be to put it right outside the buying capacity of the ordinary man and woman—the very people who would want to buy it. The true nature of my dilemma therefore was—a big book at a high price, restricted sales, and the whole purpose of the book negated. The alternative—an abridged version, retaining all the most worthwhile material, brought within the buying range of workers and their wives, and thus assured a wide sale.

The problem was submitted to Wilfred Burchett himself, as well as to that most remarkable gentle-

man, his father, and we agreed, the three of us, that the book should be published in the abridged version and the real purpose of the author fulfilled—the truth about the Korean conflict told to as wide an audience as possible.

The utmost pains have been taken with the cutting and nothing has been deleted which would mar the intent of the author or affect its truthfulness. I am confident the general reader will support our decision and will join with me in applauding the splendid qualities of this outstanding Australian correspondent who, in the first place, made the book possible.

It is the wish of the author and myself that the book will help to strengthen the efforts now being made to end This Monstrous War and to prevent the outbreak of others.

INTRODUCTION

IT has been the author's lot to follow fairly closely the developments which led from President Truman's declaration of the "cold war" in 1947 to the outbreak of the "hot war" in Korea in June, 1950. The strivings of the American war-makers to develop a shooting war in Europe in the spring of 1949, primarily in Germany have been dealt with in a previous book, *Cold War in Germany*. Their machinations in Eastern Europe and the attempts to co-ordinate civil war and a Titoist invasion of Hungary with the outbreak of hostilities in Germany were outlined and documented in a subsequent book, *People's Democracies*.

The author has attended the historic Korean cease-fire talks almost from the day they started until the Americans finally broke them off on October 8, 1952, with a few intervals during which he visited prisoner of war camps and investigated germ warfare. The Korean cease-fire talks were historic because they were the climax till that time, of the global battle for peace.

From the date of Truman's declaration of the "cold war," there has been no doubt in the author's mind that the ruling circles in the United States and Britain were agreed on a new world war to crush the Soviet Union and the People's Democracies. And this followed along precisely the same pattern as the attempts by the imperialist powers to smother in blood the infant Soviet Union after World War I. From conversations with top-level administrators in Germany and from personal observations there, it became clear that the leading American administrators were working for a war to break out in the spring of 1949. The only question was how to arrange the matter. War

could only be declared by Act of Congress, and Congress having to take public opinion into account, could scarcely rubber-stamp in advance an overt American-initiated war—even under the guise of a preventive war.

(Some top administration officials later suggested overcoming this dilemma—when it seemed the Korean war would not spread far and fast enough—by actually launching a preventive war. The most candid spokesman for this group was U.S. Secretary of the Navy, Francis Mathews, who on August 25, 1950, made a speech in Boston demanding a preventive war “which would cast us in a character new to a true democracy—an initiator of a war of aggression . . . the first aggressors for peace.” Secretary of Defence, Louis Johnson, made a number of speeches along the same lines, while Truman made the classic statement that he was determined “to have world peace even if America had to fight the Soviet Union to gain it.”)

The years 1948 and 1949 were bad for the Americans in Europe. People's power was consolidated in the People's Democracies. The plans for war in Germany and civil war in Eastern Europe were foiled. General Clay, who had been entrusted with executing the American war-makers' policy for a war in Europe in 1949, was recalled.

The plans to get the “preventive” war started in Europe were checked but the overall strategy of the war-makers was not to be scrapped so lightly. Their eyes turned to the Far East where matters were also not proceeding very much to their liking. Despite billions of dollars' worth of assistance, the American armed and trained Kuomintang troops were being defeated. American taxpayers were becoming more and more restive about contributing good money after bad to support the corrupt and defeated Chiang Kai-shek. It was impossible to mobilise public opinion for a cause so obviously discredited; impossible to ask Americans either to lay down their lives or contribute

further dollars to save this badly broken American straw. On the other hand, it was imperative in view of Chiang's defeat, for America to get back on the mainland of Asia and not let the fighting die out completely. If only a toe-hold could be secured somewhere, the war-makers were sure it could be enlarged and American capital could gradually step its way back into Asia again.

The book which follows will show how a war situation developed in Korea; how it was fostered and exploited by the Americans; how they failed; why they were forced to negotiate; and how the negotiations were conducted.

The delivery of this manuscript to the publishers was delayed for many months in the hope that the author would be able to write "Finis" to the Korean conflict. Virtually no progress was made in the talks for the six months from April, 1952, until the Americans broke off the talks in October, due to American reluctance to take the final steps which would have led to peace.

W. G. BURCHETT.

Kaesong, November 4, 1952.

Chapter 1

BACKGROUND TO LIBERATION

THE history of all Asian peoples throughout the past centuries is one of unrelieved, bitter suffering. They have all groaned under the yoke of semi-barbarian feudalism. In the case of Korea and a number of other Asian countries, the people during the past century have had a ruthless imperialism grafted on to their own native variety of oppression. The dawn-to-dusk slavery in the fields, the thrifty husbandry of both sexes from earliest childhood to premature old age yielded fat crops of food grains, but the people often enough ate grass and bark, after tribute was paid to the imperialist occupiers, rent to the avaricious landlord, and taxes to the corrupt state.

A very brief sketch of some of the later aspects of Japanese occupation is necessary to understand the events leading to the civil war which started in June, 1950, and developed into the most brutal of all imperialist wars in Asia.

It is in the nature of imperialism to be brutal and vicious, to deal in wholesale slaughter and plunder, to stamp out national cultures, suppress native arts and customs and even the language of the people. There is no racial distinction about imperialist methods and lest any western readers should think that the form which imperialism assumed in Korea was particularly vicious because it was Japanese imperialism, then they must be reminded of the fact that British imperialism in Malaya and elsewhere to-day, as well as French and Dutch imperialism assume precisely the same forms—

and American imperialism in Korea has far surpassed in sadistic violence and wanton destruction the worst excesses of Japanese imperialism. The methods adopted by imperialists are tempered only by the technical means at their disposal and the resistance of their colonial victims.

The difference between American imperialism at work in Korea and that of the Japanese is firstly American superiority in technique, and secondly American hypocrisy in operating under the flag of the United Nations and the slogans of "Liberation" and "Resistance to Aggression."

During the 40 years of Japanese occupation of Korea which ended on August 15, 1945, the Korean people never ceased to struggle against their imperialist masters. Workers, peasants and intellectuals fought back in factories and forests, in schools and churches. The struggle took many different forms and had many ups and downs, but it never died out. The belief in eventual liberation was always kept alive by heroic patriots inside and outside the country.

It was only after the October Revolution and the setting up of the Soviet state, however, that the struggle began to take on a planned and organised form. This eventually led to armed struggle together with Chinese patriots in the Anti-Japanese Allied United Front in Manchuria and North China. The united struggle of Korean and Chinese patriots after the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 provides an example of complete fraternal unity between two peoples unprecedented in history up to that time.

On March 1, 1919, a great mass meeting was held in Seoul's spacious Pagoda Park. It was organised by intellectuals, students, professors and religious leaders. Christian leaders spoke from the same platform as leaders of the native Korean religious group, the Chundo Kyo, or Heavenly Way sect. Although organised by intellectuals the meeting was a reflection of the intense unrest among the whole Korean people.

A fervently enthusiastic audience of Korean citizens unanimously approved a "Declaration of Korean Independence" signed by 33 prominent patriots and intellectuals and read at the meeting. The declaration demanded complete independence and copies of it were forwarded to governments in the outside world—and also to Governor Yamanaishi.

The Pagoda Park meeting was the signal for similar demonstrations throughout the country—and the signal, too, for savage repressive measures by the Japanese. Thousands of patriots were tortured and massacred. At Suwon, for instance, all Christians were ordered into the local church which was then set on fire, the soldiers shooting down any who tried to escape.

Tens of thousands of Koreans went into exile after the suppression of the March 1 movement. They crossed into Siberia, Manchuria and China proper. Some who could afford it went to the United States. The "Declaration of Independence" did make its impact abroad and the movement itself had its effect on the Japanese government. There was a slight relaxation of the former cultural suppression measures. Two Korean language daily papers were permitted, the *Dong A Eilbo* (Oriental Daily) and the *Chosen Eilbo* (Korean Daily).

The new policy in no way changed the determination to throw off the Japanese yoke, although for some time the main burden of organising resistance was borne by those outside the country. The overthrow of Tsarist power in Russia and the successful fight being waged by the Bolsheviks against the armies of intervention sparked the hopes of the Korean people as it did people throughout the colonial world and it generated planned activity inside and outside the country, which eventually led to armed struggle. The March 1 movement had demonstrated clearly enough that only by armed struggle would liberation be won.

By 1920, groups of exiles abroad already formed the first two branches of the Korean Communist Party

—one in Irkutsk in the Soviet Union, the other in Shanghai. Formed by intellectuals, isolated from the working people in their own country, these branches were little more than debating societies and were short-lived, but they demonstrated that even such a short time after the Soviet revolution the exiles realised that only through a political party based on the working class, employing scientific revolutionary methods, could the true liberation of Korea be brought about. In 1924 there was a movement inside Korea which provided the basis for unifying workers and peasants into one political party. Unrest due to worsening economic conditions and renewed cultural suppression brought into being a Workers and Peasants General League, a League of Korean Youth Associations, a Women's Federation and a Students' Federation. Young Marxists who returned from exile knit these organisations into one party and a Korean Communist Party was established on Korean soil on April 17, 1925, and was affiliated with the Third International in March the following year. A Young Communist League was also founded. Under the leadership of the C.P. and the Y.C.L., an anti-Japanese United Front was formed and a move was also launched to fight for better economic conditions. Strikes soon broke out in Japanese factories and peasants began to refuse to pay taxes. The Korean masses recognised the Communist Party as the vanguard of a resistance movement.

The Japanese were not slow to react. In November, 1925, six months after the formation of the Communist Party, they struck, arresting a number of leaders.

In a comparatively small country like Korea, the Japanese were able to pack even the tiniest village with their police and spies. Illegal work for an inexperienced party became almost impossible. Executions, savage tortures and imprisonment of almost the entire leadership made organised, mass political work out of the question. The party was dissolved by the Comintern in 1928, although individual Communists